

OPPORTUNITY TO REDUCE RESISTANCE TO CHANGE IN A PROCESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Predișcan Mariana

West University of Timisoara Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

Săcui Violeta

West University of Timisoara Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

This paper aims to present the research results conducted on several models of organizational change regarding the identification of the appropriate moment in which the managers' interest should turn towards the reduction of the employees resistance to change. More specifically, we intend to identify when is the best moment to reduce the resistance to change, depending on the change we want to achieve.

Keywords: organizational change, resistance to change, success, opportunity, organizational change model

Cod JEL : O30, O39

Introduction

Successful organizational change depends on many factors. Managers may intervene on some factors and thus can use these as levers in order to reach the established objectives set by the desired change faster and to a greater degree. In the case of other factors, specialist intervention is unnecessary, since specialists can not create the effects on the final outcome in a process of organizational change.

Through this work we don't aim at indentifying all the factors on which managers can intervene in order to ensure higher chances of success for a particular change. Our focus in this work turns towards two factors that can ensure a high degree of success of a change. One of these refers to the efficient and effective reduction of the resistance to change of the employees affected by the change. Another one, equally important, is represented by the completion of the actions meant to lead to the implementation of the desired change in a logical manner, well structured and with clearly defined objectives at each step. In other words, the need that an implementation of a change be not chaotic, but to follow a change model, a process of change that would include a clear chain of steps, of stages that need to be completed. This is the reason why many management or organizational change management specialists have suggested change models on which the process of change should be based. Given the fact that the changes that may take place in an organization are extremely diverse, the models recommended by experts for their implementation in the organizations are also extremely diverse.

Models of organizational change

Many specialists concerned with making changes in organizations have proposed, for a greater success of those changes, also a plan of action, an order in which certain activities were recommended to be carried out. This led to the current situation that literature abounds in such theories and models of organizational development and change.

A. Van de Ven and S. Pool (1995) have concluded, after the studies conducted, that the processes of development and change in organizations are explained by experts through four types of theories. These are:

- life cycle theory;
- teleological theory;

- dialectical theory;
- evolutionary theory

Each of these theories shows that change is taking place after a certain sequence of phases of the process (different sequences), in which the mechanisms that take place are customised. In order to see the specific change processes, researchers often combine elements of the four theories presented above. Each of the four theories provides a way to describe the process of change in an organization which actually represents a model of organizational change.

R.M.Kanter, B.A.Stein, Tood D. Jick (1992) conducted a comprehensive analysis of representative models of organizational change. They argue that organizational change is usually modeled as a three-part process. In support of this assertion, the authors indicated above summarize in a table the stages to be completed, according to different specialists, so that change take place.

Table 1. Models of organizational change

| MODEL | PROCES |
|--------------------------|--|
| Lewin(1947) | Unfreeze Change Freeze |
| Beckhard și Hariss(1977) | The current state The transition state The future state |
| Beer (1980) | Dissatisfaction Process Modeling |
| Kanter (1983) | Separation of tradition and crises Strategic decisions and the first movements Action and institutionalization |
| Tichy și Devanna (1986) | Act I Awareness Act II Mobilization Act III (Epilogue) Empowerment |
| Nadler și Tushman (1989) | Energizing Vision Posibilizare |

Source: R.M.Kanter, B.A.Stein, Tood D. Jick - *The challenge of organizational change*, Free Press, New York, 1992

The specialty literature of our country proposes two representative models of organizational change: the Popescu - Florescu model in 1988 and the Predișcan model in 2001.

Research results

We have considered several models of organizational change and we have noticed that there are many models that do not contain explicitly the step of reducing resistance to change (Moorhead - Griffin 1998, 2009, Lewin 1947, Beckhard and Hariss 1977, J. McCalman and R. Paton 1992, Block 2000, Cooperrider 2003). A relevant example is the model Florescu and Popescu (1988) where the step of reducing resistance to change does not exist. In many models the phase of reducing resistance to change can be inferred from the presentation of actions that aim at making people believe that the proposed change is necessary, even if the name of this stage is not explicitly presented (Kanter 1983, Tichy and Devanna 1986, Nadler and Tushman 1989, John P Kotter in 1995 and 2002).

Kotter's (6) eight step change model can be summarised as:

- 1. Increase urgency** - inspire people to move, make objectives real and relevant.
- 2. Build the guiding team** - get the right people in place with the right emotional commitment, and the right mix of skills and levels.
- 3. Get the vision right** - get the team to establish a simple vision and strategy, focus on emotional and creative aspects necessary to drive service and efficiency.
- 4. Communicate for buy-in** - Involve as many people as possible, communicate the essentials, simply, and to appeal and respond to people's needs. De-clutter communications - make technology work for you rather than against.
- 5. Empower action** - Remove obstacles, enable constructive feedback and lots of support from leaders - reward and recognize progress and achievements.
- 6. Create short-term wins** - Set aims that are easy to achieve - in bite-size chunks. Manageable numbers of initiatives. Finish current stages before starting new ones.
- 7. Don't let up** - Foster and encourage determination and persistence - ongoing change - encourage ongoing progress reporting - highlight achieved and future milestones.
- 8. Make change stick** - Reinforce the value of successful change via recruitment, promotion, new change leaders. Weave change into culture.

In several stages of this model, even if it is not said that the aim is to lower the resistance to change, it is recommended that managers use methods, techniques and procedures aimed at exactly that. These are: communication, positive motivation, encouraging people, etc..

In other models of change this stage is explicitly presented, is given great importance in the change process and is usually positioned before implementing the change. An example is the model presented by J. Ivancevich, James H. Donnelly and James Gibson (1989). According to this model, organizational change can be done after following the following steps:

1. Understanding the factors that trigger change
2. Recognition the need for change
3. Diagnosis of the problem
4. Identification of the methods and alternatives that will make the change
5. Presenting the existing conditions
6. Selecting the method
7. Overcome the resistance to change
8. Implementing and coordination of change.

It may be noted that the authors located stage 7 (overcoming resistance to change) before the implementation phase.

In 2001, the model of organizational change proposed by M. Predișcan to be used in particular for achieving strategic large-scale changes in an organization, presents explicitly within the second phase of the model, the phase of reducing resistance to change.

The Predișcan model suggests the following steps and phases.

1. Awareness of the need for change
 - 1.1. Data collection and analysis;
 - 1.2. Identifying the need for change;
 - 1.3. Evaluation of change and choice of the best variant(s).
2. Design of the change
 - 2.1. Develop the implementation schedule of the change;
 - 2.2. Reducing resistance to change;
3. Implementing change
 - 3.1. The actual implementation
 - 3.2. Monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the results
 - 3.3. Improving the change

This model also establishes the actions meant to ensure the reduction of resistance to change before the transition to the implementation of the desired change.

The importance of the actions of reducing resistance to change is particularly large in any process of organizational change. Not infrequently, the failure of a change was given by the opposition of the employees who did not understand well enough the purpose for which the managers wanted to accomplish that change. Of course that the greater the number of employees affected by a change, the greater is the effort that managers need to submit to gain their commitment to change. Obviously not only the number of employees influences the degree of the managers' efforts, or the necessary time to effectively reduce human resistance to change. Analyzing two different organizations we will find that the force with which employees oppose to a change differs greatly. The employees opposition to the managers proposals may be different from one organization to another, from one employee to another, from one change to another, it may strengthen or, on the contrary, weaken, depending on the expression of the following elements:

- organizational culture
- characteristics of the environment in which the organization operates;
- the nature of the activities of the organization;
- emergency of change;
- the extent to which the rhythm of change required by managers is supported by employees;
- management style;
- type of organizational structure;
- the quality of the organization's information system, etc..

There are many situations in organizations when it is necessary to make emergency changes. In such moments there is time to perform all phases of a traditional process of change. Obviously we will not have time to plan the change, and the time that we have available for making a change in practice is extremely short. In such circumstances it is necessary to carry out required changes.

We propose for these cases even a reversal of the order of the stages of a process of organizational change. For the changes required in crisis situations, we recommend the following steps:

1. Identify necessary changes
2. Implementing change;
3. Reducing resistance to change.

The first stage of the process is no longer based on a comprehensive analysis of environment and internal environment of the organization. In crisis conditions it is easier to identify the type of change needed because the events that occurred and resulted in a crisis situation are known. Starting from the effects of these events on the organization it is tried that by identifying the necessary change, the bad influence of these events on the organization be corrected.

After having answered the question: What is to be changed?, we recommend to proceed urgently to the implementation of the changes identified as necessary.

After the change has been implemented we recommend the third stage to be followed as well, that is, the reduction of resistance to change. Otherwise, the chances of successful long-term changes may be affected by further reactions of opposition of the employees.

Conclusions

After more research of organizational change models, we have reached the following conclusions:

- not all models of organizational change present reducing resistance to change as a necessary stage;
- the place of this phase in the models of organizational change is not considered to be the same;

- some models of organizational change recommend indirectly reducing employee resistance to change by indicating the use of some methods, techniques, processes that would lead to this result. Here we include mainly: communication, training, positive motivation of employees;
- we recommended that the place of this stage should vary depending on the desired change to achieve;
- in strategic changes, which are extremely important for an organization and which affect a large number of employees, we recommend that the reduction of the employee resistance to change be achieved before passing to the implementation of the plan developed to implement the change;
- in imposed changes, in conditions of crisis when we have no time available to plan the change, immediately after it had been implemented it is necessary to conduct effective actions meant to ensure, even if the change has been made, the reduction of the resistance to change of the affected employees
- to achieve time savings in the process of organizational change, we recommend that after having obtained a certain attachment of some employees to change, the implementation of the methods, of the techniques that would increase their commitment to continue to be developed in parallel with the implementation of the change.

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